

When I Am Afraid...in the Airport

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I enjoy following along on social media as different pastors and church groups travel to various countries for ministry. Pictures, updates, videos—never have we had such colorful, immediate knowledge about the efforts of other believers. I especially like to look at the faces of the people when pictures are posted of the group sitting in the airport, awaiting their adventure. Some look eager and prepared. Others are goofing off to pass the time. A few appear anxious. I can relate to that last group.



A Confession

When I'm about to leave for ministry in a different country, I often find myself asking, "Why am I doing this?" Sometimes I begin to fret over the gut-poisoning food that I might eat. I occasionally find myself worrying about if I'll be able to communicate what the people really need to hear. I might even start missing my wife and kids, though I haven't even left the ground yet! I smile outwardly and try to act like I'm ready to go "conquer the world for Jesus," but now and then inwardly there's a part of me that wishes it was two weeks later and the trip was over.

I'm not so "tough," am I? I'm guessing some of you feel kind of wimpy in similar circumstances. Maybe you have wanted to talk about Christ with a neighbor for months, but to this point you've felt incapable or afraid. Possibly you are anxious about a mysterious ailment and find yourself wondering if you will respond like a believer if the diagnosis is bad.

How can we overcome our fears when nervous about what lies ahead? Here's what I do at the airport.

I remember that the Lord is with me, and he is for me.

My mind often goes to the Lord's words to Joshua when he was about to lead the Israelites into the Promised Land: "Just as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you or forsake you" (Joshua 1:5). That's a reality for all believers (see Hebrews 13:5-6). As I sit there, waiting to board the plane, I

think about that promise and I'll open my Bible and reflect on other promises, and I find rest for my nervous soul.

I admit my weakness to the Lord, and ask for his power.

I tell the Lord what I'm experiencing and ask him to give me strength and even joy in the journey. He's never let me down. As George Muller once said, "If the Lord fails me at this time, it will be the first time." Inevitably, within a couple of days I find myself in a remote village, inside a tin-roofed church building with mud walls, teaching a group of eager church leaders, and the power of God is felt to such a degree that I almost never experience in any other ministry context.

I talk to the brother who is traveling with me.

On most international trips, I travel with one other Christian man. This is wise for several reasons, such as for sharing the ministry once there, and for keeping one another accountable. But I've also found that it's just good to have another brother along for encouraging interaction. Whether in an airport nervous about an international trip, or sitting at home awaiting the doctor's report about your blood test, our brothers and sisters in Christ are God's gifts to steady us, to laugh with us, to remind us of the mission we are on together for Christ's fame.

Then What?

I eventually get on the airplane, and off we go. And guess what? The Lord is always with me, his power is always made perfect in my weakness (2 Cor 9:9), and it is always a joy to serve the Lord with another brother.

With the Lord's presence, promises, power, and people, we have nothing to fear.

*When I am afraid,
I put my trust in you.
In God, whose word I praise,
In God I trust; I shall not be afraid.
What can flesh do to me? (Psalm 56:3-4)*